

**Reflections for the funeral of Mark David Brinkman**  
**10 November 2012**  
**Muncie Alliance Church**  
**By Mark L. Vincent**

The morning after Mark's death I attended Wednesday morning prayers at my home congregation. We read from Psalm 115 and these words stood out to me:

*"The Lord is not praised by the dead, by any who go down to the Land of silence. But, we, the living, will give thanks to him, now and forever." (vv.17,18)*

For the Hebrew—gathering in worship at the tabernacle or temple to recite these words—being permitted to praise God in a long and prosperous life was a sign of God's merciful favor. We who are Christian look at verses like these through the prism of the cross and the resurrection, assured that those who embrace God's forgiveness will be raised to new life where we will praise God beyond death and the grave.

We have no other answers than these, and we are unwise to try to find them. To possess a mature faith is to look at chaos and call it what it is: **chaos**. To hold on to hope our eyes must be opened to how deeply evil clings to all that is good, how evil has adhered itself to all this is right and just, ruining all that we would love, destroying what God creates. And with opened eyes, we can see that God suffers beside us and offers a transformed creation, a resurrection body, and a greater purpose in a life that really is life.

If our eyes are not open to this we will demand answers and explanation and responsibility for what took Mark from us. Worse, we will keep thinking that this world is supposed to offer us paradise and should grant us comfort. We will willingly keep believing the lie that this life and what comforts we get from are what matter, when we know the truth deep down—that this life will eventually wear us down with its sorrow and bring us to our end. And in the end we will either be people who believed we could save ourselves, people who believed in powers that could not help us, or people who lived by the hope of God's promises.

The writer of Psalm 115 is faced with these same choices, and having made the choice, writes lyrics that become a song of faith his people have recited for generations.

## Psalm 115 (GNB)

### The One True God

To you alone, O LORD, to you alone,  
and not to us, must glory be given  
because of your constant love and faithfulness.

Why should the nations ask us,  
“Where is your God?”

Our God is in heaven;  
he does whatever he wishes.

Their gods are made of silver and gold,  
formed by human hands.

They have mouths, but cannot speak,  
and eyes, but cannot see.

They have ears, but cannot hear,  
and noses, but cannot smell.

They have hands, but cannot feel,  
and feet, but cannot walk;  
they cannot make a sound.

May all who made them and who trust in them  
become like the idols they have made.

Trust in the LORD, you people of Israel.  
He helps you and protects you.

Trust in the LORD, you priests of God.  
He helps you and protects you.

Trust in the LORD, all you that worship him.  
He helps you and protects you.

The LORD remembers us and will bless us;  
he will bless the people of Israel  
and all the priests of God.

He will bless everyone who honours him,  
the great and the small alike.

May the LORD give you children —  
you and your descendants!

May you be blessed by the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth!

Heaven belongs to the LORD alone,  
but he gave the earth to the human race.

***The LORD is not praised by the dead,  
by any who go down to the land of silence.  
But we, the living, will give thanks to him  
now and forever.***

During these days I have been thinking a lot about Ernest Hemingway, the great talent that he was, and that in the end he could not fight the chaos any longer, choosing to take his own life. But in spite of all that broke him in the end, a brighter light shone still—one that gave the world great literature, one that gave his family a legacy beyond the violence he did to himself, and a life that outshone the manner of his death.

We are here today because we believe that of Mark. In spite of the sorrows that claimed him, a brighter light shines, one that gave love, service and insight for all of us who loved him, one that gives his family a great wealth of friends all around the world along with an unmatched worldview. His life truly outshines an untimely death.

Henri Nouwen says all this far better:

*“Joy does not come from positive predictions about the state of the world. It does not depend on the ups and downs of the circumstances of our lives. Joy is based on the spiritual knowledge that, while the world in which we live is shrouded in darkness, God has overcome the world. Jesus says it loudly and clearly: ‘In the world you will have troubles, but rejoice, I have overcome the world.’*

*The surprise is not that, unexpectedly, things turn out better than expected. No, the real surprise is that God’s light is more real than all the darkness, that God’s truth is more powerful than all human lies, that God’s love is stronger than death.”*

*-From Here and Now*

We are here to bear witness to that greater light that shone in Mark’s life. We want to give the time to our memories and stories—an offering and commendation to God if you will. This is a time to enjoy being part of a faith community, the type of community Mark believed in so deeply. And may Christ join us in this circle as we share . . . .

---

*You left us weeping, but glad to have known you.  
You left us wondering, but loving you because we knew your love.  
May the light you thought was extinguished surround you,  
warm you, hold you, heal you and resurrect you to new life.*

*I miss you friend. We all do.*